

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

ICRC Action in Cyprus

At the beginning of this month, the ICRC sent to some Governments and all National Societies a memorandum describing the ICRC's work in Cyprus since December 1974. We give below some extracts:

Introduction

The instability which still prevails in Cyprus, indicated in particular by major population shifts, has resulted in a great many humanitarian problems, demanding protection, medical and material assistance, and action by the Tracing Agency. The ICRC has therefore maintained in Cyprus a delegation of some forty persons, including ten delegates, four specialists in Agency problems, three relief supply delegates, two doctors and five mobile medical teams provided by National Red Cross Societies.

Protection

In the South, in the area controlled by Greek Cypriot authorities, the ICRC has continued to provide care for the Turkish Cypriot population, paying regular visits to some 70 villages in which they are gathered. It has kept under close observation the conditions under which these people are living and has intervened with the authorities to bring about any necessary improvements. The delegates have given special attention to making sure that relief supplies are distributed regularly by the authorities and that the people have freedom of movement.

In the North, in the area under the control of the Turkish army, the ICRC has continued its work in protecting and assisting the Greek Cypriot people living in some 50 villages and two cities. Despite some

restrictions on their freedom of movement, the delegates made every effort to maintain continuous contact with those isolated communities. Various incidents were brought to their attention and they have accordingly intervened with the authorities to take appropriate action. Investigations were requested in a number of instances.

Population Transfers

On 30 November, on the initiative of the ICRC, an agreement was concluded between Mr. Clerides and Mr. Denktash, representing, respectively, the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. The agreement provided for the transfer from the North to the South, and vice versa, of certain categories of persons—the wounded, the sick, elderly persons, children and pregnant women. Following the unilateral proclamation of a federal Turkish Cypriot State, however, these transfers were halted on 27 January by the Greek Cypriot authorities, who permitted only transfers requested by the ICRC for urgent medical reasons.

From 1 December 1974 to 26 January 1975, 716 Turkish Cypriots were transferred to the northern area, 245 cases remaining on the waiting list. During the same period, 505 Greek Cypriots were moved to the southern area, with 123 cases still on the waiting list.

These operations were carried out by the ICRC, which selected the persons and arranged transport.

Medical Activities

The isolated Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities continue to be in great need also of medical services, which sick and aged people in these communities have long been receiving from the ICRC's mobile medical teams. These teams, made available to the ICRC from the outset by the German Federal Republic, Denmark, Finland, Ireland and Sweden, have therefore been kept on the spot.

In the South, the mobile teams providing general medical services have been progressively replaced by a system of clinical medicine, with particular emphasis on caring for geriatric cases. At present, two medical teams provide weekly consultations at various points, particularly in the hospitals at Limassol, Larnaca, Polis and Paphos.

The ICRC also works in close co-operation with four Turkish Cypriot doctors who remained in the South and who now have complete freedom of movement within their respective districts. The ICRC teams have worked out with them a programme of visits to all of the Turkish villages.

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In the North, three medical teams continue to look after the medical and hygienic needs of Greek Cypriot communities, having set up dispensaries which receive scores of persons every day. The teams have also been active in preventive medicine, maintaining close epidemiological surveillance, particularly after the outbreak of bacillary dysentery and its spread in Gypsos and Voni in 1974. In the town of Morphou, the medical teams have to deal with a major medical and sanitary problem due to the action of the Turkish authorities in gathering together in the town the residents of nearby villages, consisting mainly of aged persons.

Although the Greek Cypriot population depended for care almost entirely upon the ICRC medical teams up to the end of 1974, the ICRC since then has been successful in inducing the authorities to arrange for Turkish Cypriot doctors to take over an increasing share in the work. This has enabled the ICRC teams to give increased attention to medico-social work and to provide protection.

Tracing Agency

The Tracing Agency has continued to play a major role in ICRC activities in Cyprus. On average, five Agency delegates—sometimes more, sometimes less—with the assistance of some 80 local employees, have been occupied in tracing missing persons, keeping the population informed, forwarding family messages and arranging the transfers of civilians. For these various tasks, the ICRC has maintained a central bureau in Nicosia, with an annex for the northern zone, and, in co-operation with the Cypriot Red Cross, four regional Agency bureaus in Limassol, Larnaca, Ormidhia and Paphos.

The search for missing persons called for great efforts by Agency personnel and delegates. After country-wide investigations, about a thousand cases were solved by the Agency. The Agency also co-operated with the bipartite *ad hoc* committee which took over responsibility for finding missing persons at the beginning of this year. This co-operation took the form of turning over to the *ad hoc* committee, consisting of representatives of both sides, the facts it had already gathered on unsolved cases. The information bureau for families, set up by the Agency after the hostilities, still receives every day a large number of persons who come to seek or supply information.

Since postal communications have still not been restored between the two zones, Red Cross family messages remain the only means of correspondence, within the island as well as abroad. As of 1 March, the Agency had despatched about 600,000 messages. An average of 6,000 messages a day are still being handed to ICRC delegates.

Relief

The ICRC has maintained a relief co-ordinator in Nicosia, as well as two relief delegates, one for each zone. It has also continued to manage two warehouses for relief supplies, at Limassol and Nicosia.

In the South, assistance to displaced Greek Cypriots is provided by the Government and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. The ICRC has nevertheless made regular deliveries to the appropriate governmental agencies of large quantities of supplementary foodstuffs—meat, baby foods and powdered milk—for these persons.

The delegates have continued their distributions to Turkish Cypriot communities, supplementing the activities of the Government and of the Turkish Red Crescent in villages.

In the North, relief distributions are carried out through the United Nations. The ICRC makes emergency distributions in case of need. The delegates verify that all distributions are made fairly.

Financial situation

The foregoing enumeration of ICRC activities in Cyprus clearly shows the number of humanitarian problems still confronting the institution. There is reason to fear that a great many of these problems will not be finally solved until there is, eventually, a political settlement. The ICRC has therefore decided to maintain its existing forces on the island, pending developments.

The budget for the first six months of 1975 amounts to 5 million Swiss francs. In view of the continued need for its protection and assistance, the ICRC is sure that the required financial resources will be given to it to enable it to carry on its work.